

REMARKS

In response to the Final Office Action mailed September 25, 2007, Applicant respectfully requests reconsideration. Claims 23-44 were last presented for examination. In the outstanding Office Action, claims 23-44 were rejected. Claim 23 has been amended in this response and no claims have been added. Thus, upon entry of this paper, claims 23-44 will remain pending in this application. Of these twenty-two claims (22), one claim (claim 23) is independent.

Claim Rejections

In the outstanding Office Action, claims 23, 25-31, 33-42 and 44 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over US Patent No. 914,546 (Amos); claim 24 was rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over Amos in view of US Patent No. 6,363,698 (Swain); claims 32 and 43 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over Amos in view of US Patent No. 2,130,442 (Worcester).

35 U.S.C. § 103 Rejections

The outstanding Office Action claims 23, 25-31, 33-42 and 44 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103 (a) as being unpatentable over U.S. Patent 914,546 to Amos. Reconsideration is respectfully requested.

Amos discloses a saddle tree, constructed wholly of resilient metal, stamped or otherwise formed to a proper contour.¹ In particular, Amos discloses a saddle tree with a seat 1 and two strips 14 or members of resilient metal that extend from points adjacent to the rim of the cantle 3 to a point adjacent to the pommel 4, where the two strips 14 or members merge into a third member or strip 15.² Further, Amos discloses the two strips 14 and strip 15 are secured to the seat 1 of the saddle tree by rivets 16 and 17, respectively.³

¹ Amos at page 1, column 1, lines 24-25.

² *Id.* at Figs. 1, 6 and 7; and page 1, lines 76-82.

³ *Id.* at Fig. 1, 6, 7 and 8; and page 2, lines 47-63.

The outstanding Office Action suggests that Applicant has misunderstood or misinterpreted Amos. In particular, the Office Action states that the reference to rigidity in Amos relates to the girth loops and straps. Applicant respectfully disagrees with the outstanding Office Action and respectfully asserts that Amos has been misinterpreted.

Applicant respectfully contends that the correct grammatical interpretation of Amos is that Amos requires (at page 1, lines 44-48): “in order to cause the *tree* to possess sufficient rigidity to prevent undue yielding...the pommel has combined with it.... an arch plate.” Amos is clearly referring to rigidity of the tree *per se*, not just holding the tree on the horse in an unyielding manner. The arch plate serves to “strengthen the pommel against yielding” (page 2, lines 18-20) as it is manufactured of thick (Fig 2) metal (page 2, line 16). Additionally, the tree body is formed with reinforcing wires 5 and 6 to “reinforce the tree against yielding (page 1, lines 100-103) and wires or bars 18 are provided between member 15 to prevent spreading (page 2, lines 68-73). It would be clear to the person skilled in the art that Amos fundamentally teaches a rigid tree.

It is well known that a thin sheet of metal will bend and crease easily. Once bent, it will not, typically, return to its original shape and the deformity will remain unless the metal is hammered back into shape. Accordingly, while the sheet metal may be *per se* “resilient” if it is to function as a basis for a saddle, it needs to be provided with a rigid frame and rigid support such that the tree body as a whole is rigid. If it is not rigid, it will yield under the pressures of riding and once deformed will remain deformed potentially causing substantial injury to the horse. One skilled in the art will appreciate that although the saddle tree of Amos is fabricated from sheet metal, the tree body as a whole must be made rigid to provide sufficient support for the sheet metal to resist damage to the sheet metal and injury to the horse.

The outstanding Office Action asserts that the tree body 1 of Amos is flexible since it is formed of resilient metal and comprises a V-shaped strengthening bar 14 with forks directed towards the cantle end of the saddle tree. The Office Action further asserts that while the bar 14 in Amos is not Y-shaped, it would have been obvious to substitute a Y shaped bar for the V-

shaped bar in Amos to arrive at the present invention⁴. Applicant respectfully disagrees with the characterization of Amos with respect to the present invention in the Office Action and respectfully traverses this rejection as follows.

With respect to the strengthening bar, Applicant respectfully contends that even if Amos can be considered to include a strengthening bar in the form of strips 14, they are part of a greater unitary structure that includes strips 15. It is the combined structure 14, 15 which needs to be compared with the Y-shape of the present invention's strengthening bar. Strips 14, 15 can be considered to be two joined V-shaped bars or an X-shaped bar. However, because the two V-shapes are directly connected, any force on, for example, one of strips 15 is transmitted to strips 14.

In contrast thereto, the present invention, by having a Y-shaped strengthening bar, disconnects forces impacting upon the pommel region of the saddle tree thereby preventing these forces from being transmitted through the "bar" to the cantle end of the saddle tree. Accordingly, a Y-shaped strengthening bar is not functionally equivalent to an X-shaped bar. The same distinction applies with respect to Swain. A substantial impact upon one of the strips 15 of Amos or the equivalent in Swain will result in a permanent twisting of the saddle tree. In contrast, in the present invention, the disconnection allowed by the use of a Y-shaped bar prevents permanent twisting of the saddle tree, meaning that any twisting of the pommel end side is absorbed and reversible, maintaining the comfortable fit of the saddle on the back of the horse.

Independent claim 23 has been amended to more clearly set forth this distinction and now reads:

A saddle tree comprising a tree body having a pommel end and a cantle end, the tree body being formed from a *flexible material allowing lateral flexing of the tree and a Y-shaped strengthening bar wherein the forks of the Y-shape are directed towards the cantle end of the saddle tree and whereby the*

⁴ See Office Action paragraph 2
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strengthening bar inhibits the transmission of forces from the pommel end to the cantle end. (emphasis added)

Applicant respectfully asserts that Amos does not disclose a tree body formed from a flexible material that allows lateral flexing of the tree body and a generally Y-shaped strengthening bar. Accordingly Applicant contends that neither Amos nor Swain, whether taken alone or in combination, do not disclose, suggest or make obvious the claimed invention as recited in independent claim 23 as amended and that claim 23 is patentable. Applicant therefore requests that rejection of claim 23 under 35 U.S.C. § 103 be withdrawn.

Moreover claims 25-31, 33-42 and 44 depend from claim 23 and, accordingly, are also patentable for at least the same reasons as claim 23 is patentable.

Claims 32 and 43 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103 (a) as being unpatentable over Amos as applied to claim 23 and further in view of Worcester. Reconsideration is respectfully requested. The outstanding Office Action asserts that while Amos is silent about a sheet of bi-directional carbon fibre applied to at least one of the upper and lower surfaces, Worcester teaches a reinforcement sheet made of iron applied to the upper surface of a saddle tree. The Office Action asserts, therefore, that it would have been obvious to employ a sheet of reinforcement as taught by Worcester on the upper surface of the saddle tree of Amos in order to reinforce and strengthen the saddle tree. Applicant respectfully disagrees with the assertions in the outstanding Office Action and traverses this rejection as follows.

Claims 32 and 43 are dependent on claim 23. As discussed above with respect to the rejection of claim 23, Amos does not teach, suggest or disclose all of the limitations of independent claim 23. In an attempt to overcome the deficiencies of Amos, the outstanding Office Action combines Worcester with Amos. However, it is respectfully submitted that neither Worcester nor Amos, whether taken alone or in combination, disclose, as amended claim 23 recites:

A saddle tree comprising a tree body having a pommel end and a cantle end, the tree body being formed from a flexible

material allowing lateral flexing of the tree and a Y-shaped strengthening bar wherein the forks of the Y-shape are directed towards the cantle end of the saddle tree and whereby the strengthening bar inhibits the transmission of forces from the pommel end to the cantle end. (emphasis added)

That is, Applicant respectfully asserts that neither Amos nor Worcester disclose a tree body formed from a flexible material that allows lateral flexing of the tree body and a generally Y-shaped strengthening bar. Thus, Worcester cannot overcome all of the deficiencies in Amos. Therefore, it is respectfully submitted that neither Amos nor Worcester, whether taken alone or in combination, disclose, suggest or make obvious the claimed invention and that for at least the same reasons that claim 23 is patentable, claims 32 and 43 are also patentable.

Dependent Claims

The dependent claims incorporate all of the subject matter of their respective independent claims and add additional subject matter, which makes them *a fortiori* and independently patentable over the art of record. Accordingly, Applicants respectfully request that the outstanding rejections of the dependent claims be reconsidered and withdrawn.

Applicant reserves the right to pursue any cancelled claims or other subject matter disclosed in this application in a continuation or divisional application, cancellations and amendments of above claims, therefore, are not to be construed as an admission regarding the patentability of any claims and Applicants reserve the right to pursue such claims in a continuation or divisional application.

Conclusion

In view of the foregoing, this application should be in condition for allowance. A notice to his effect is respectfully requested.

Along with a Request for Continued Examination (RCE) fee and an additional 2 month extension-of-time fee is due with this response. Accordingly, please charge our Deposit Account No. 22-0185, under Order No. 21046-00041-US1 from which the undersigned is authorized to draw.

Respectfully submitted,

Dated: March 25, 2008

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